

Bergen Treasurer Fills Passaic Acting CFO Role

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PASSAIC COUNTY -- Marge Cherone served her last day on Wednesday as Passaic County's acting chief financial officer, and freeholders have tapped Bergen County's treasurer to fill the vacancy, albeit on a part-time basis.

One Republican freeholder candidate has taken issue with the decision, saying that in the midst of Passaic County's tax increases and the sale of its golf course, managing the county's finances is a full-time job.

But County Administrator Anthony De Nova said the situation is only temporary as the search continues for a full-time CFO holding the proper state license for the job.

Alfred Dispoto, Bergen County's treasurer, was chosen as Passaic County's CFO by the freeholders on Sept. 11.

Dispoto, who was not available for comment this week, will be paid \$50,000 a year. He holds state certification for the county CFO position.

Bergen County spokeswoman Mabel Aragon said that the arrangement will be revisited after Dispoto has worked for Passaic County for six months.

Dispoto will assume duties in Passaic County after an agreement is finalized with Bergen County, where he will keep his full-time position. Dispoto will be the second interim CFO since D. Timothy Roberts resigned in 2005.

Cherone, who was deputy county administrator at the time, was appointed acting CFO in June 2005. Although Cherone did not hold a state license for the post, the state Department of Community Affairs allowed her to take the position on the condition that she either earn the certification or vacate the position by May 27. Cherone did not return a phone call on Wednesday seeking comment.

De Nova said that during the past two years, the job opening had been advertised on the N.J. League of Municipalities' Web site and in The Record.

"Unfortunately, there's just not a lot of people that have the license," De Nova said in his office Tuesday evening. "Those that do are comfortable where they are. Having only 21 counties, there's not a big pool to select from."

However, Jerry Holt, a former Ringwood mayor and a Republican running for freeholder, objected to the retaining a part-timer amid Passaic County's "recurring financial problems."

"There's a fair chance that their criteria include that their person must be a Democrat," Holt said. "They are probably looking at party loyalty as opposed to someone who is in fact certified by the state to perform the duties."

De Nova rejected the idea that partisanship played a role in filling the vacancy.

"If Mr. Holt knows of somebody, we'll be happy to interview them," he said. "We had to comply with the law. We are continuing our search for a full-time finance officer, without a doubt."